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AUTHOR	Tapley, Erin
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ABSTRACT

What types of considerations are appropriate for selecting artists to represent key themes in the history of art? How do minority artists in the United States fit into this selection process? Previously, most art history courses and texts emphasized the highlights of significant creative expression as evolving in the Western world antiquity. In such ancient worlds the idea of art for art's sake or art for visual pleasure was promoted. Today in the United States many people do not lay claim to such roots. Modern minority artists may make art work for the purposes of social unrest and outcry, outweighing aesthetic concerns. Gradually they are being lauded for their efforts to use art as a change agent through increasing consciousness. But students, and especially mainstream students, may be alienated by the methods of these artists' messages, especially if they use art to radically describe their minority experiences. Thus, how to present such artists is a challenge which trial and time might eventually meet. During a course, an educator gave the art history students an informal survey in the form of written response exercises and also made notes of their verbal comments when applicable. Students were also asked at the end of artist coverage to pose a question they would ask artists if they were the guest speaker. Artists covered in the course were I. Robert Colescott, Jean Michel Basquiat, Kara Walker, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, Masami Teraoka, and Adrian Piper. Cites 12 works and five videos used. Attached are student responses to artists. (Author/BT)

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ART OF ANGER. ART OF HUMOR.: REACTIONS OF WHITE STUDENTS TO RADICAL MINORITY VISUAL ARTISTS

ERIN TAPLEY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN

SO 035 036

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Art of Anger. Art of Humor.: Reactions of White Students to Radical Minority Visual Artists

Abstract:

What types of considerations are appropriate for selecting artists to represent key themes in the history of art? How do minority artists in America fit into this selection process? Until recently, most art history courses and texts emphasized the "highlights" of significant creative expression as evolving in the Western world antiquity. In such ancient worlds the idea of "art for art's sake" or art for visual pleasure above all was promoted.

Today in the United States many people do not lay claim to such roots and modern minority artists may also make art work whose purposes of social unrest and outcry outweigh aesthetic concerns. Gradually they are being lauded for their efforts to use art as a change agent through increasing consciousness. But students and especially mainstream students may be alienated by the methods of these artists' messages, especially if they use art to radically describe their minority experiences. Thus how to present such artists is a challenge which trial and time might eventually meet.

Once while hidden within the closet doors of our lecture hall I overhead a student commenting to another, "You better study all those weird black and Spanish artists for the test because she's into that." Although tempted, I didn't burst from my invisibility and yell "gotcha;" or even accuse them of a racist comment, but this moment etched in my consciousness a sense of sensitivity,

which I hope never leaves me. My stance was one of earnestness. I was teaching in a community which was virtually all white. My modern art history course had recently begun studying many avant-garde, post-modern American artists. About one-fourth of these artists were non-white and some of these were first or second generation Americans. Although, I had not thought that I had chosen particularly "radical or weird" artists in the larger scheme of my class topics, I wondered if my identification of these artists, emphasized within their non-traditional art forms, might have been part of the estrangement factor. I began to make notes of how students responded to certain artists.

Assessment and Reactions

At present, the procedure and results of my informal surveying are qualitative. I gave my students surveys as written response type-exercises and also made notes of their verbal comments when applicable. Gathering public opinion on any featured artist seemed to force my students to think about how their work fits the student's definition of "art". As for the represented "radical minority" artists, I posed questions of greater emphasis on the issues the artist was displaying and students could respond to these

anonymously. I also asked students at the end of our artist coverage to pose a question they would ask the artist, if he/she were a guest speaker. In time, this kind of talk-show provocation did cause my students to be become more engaged in our discussions and it allowed me to gauge how they were first viewing the work and how I could enhance their interpretation through explanation and discussion.

My Students:

Most of my Art History II students attended the course because it was one of three possible arts electives which had no prerequisites. This meant that usually not even Art History I was a part of their backgrounds, nor usually was any studio art course. The average student knowledge of art history was severely lacking, according to the results of a pre-test.

Nonetheless, the course was as much about conversing with art as it was learning about its trends and masters. Thus, typical things I would ask my students to know were: artistic milieu of an artist's life (place, time, conditions, education etc.) and his/her contributions to art world (new inventions, styles, attitudes, etc.). Thus, I openly forecast the contents of exams in our daily opinion

surveys of various artists. Not only did I take attendance with their ballots but this compelled them to recall reasons why the selected artists should be considered an important figure or not.

As the class entered the twentieth century with its abstract and conceptual art forms, my students became more doubtful about the art they were seeing. When this type of art became coupled with contexts of minority artists by minority artists, I felt the enmity rise.

Selected "Radical Minority Artists"

The following paragraphs describe selected artists which were covered in my class and well as my student questions and reactions. Over half are African-American and all but two are American-born, although all live and work in America full-time.

1. Robert Colescott:

Robert Colescott is both appreciated and scorned for his satirical paintings. In 1997, he became the United States representative at the gala world art show, the Biennale. For this event he was the second America to ever have a solo show at the event and the second African-American to be represented there. His paintings are about challenging stereotypes and encouraging reflection on the

status of race relations in general, which he accomplishes through appropriation. Colescott recapitulates classical Western paintings with enough compositional accuracy so that they are recognizable, but changes the identity of many key figures, often into African-Americans. Debatably, he also changes the temperament of the work itself and his titles emphasize this possibility. For example, from Vincent Van Gogh's somber painting: The Potato Eaters, (in which a family of five sit around a grim table ready to consume the dull tubers they've spent most of their lives farming), Colescott retitles the work: "Eat Dem Taters" and depicts a jovial crowd of African-Americans anxiously digging into a barbecue fare set before them. DeKooning's famous Woman series is transformed with a frontal, smiling Aunt Jemima who seems to mouth his title: "Ooh I just loves it too, when I sees de Koo." Colescott's painting style although imitative is said to be original. The application of the paint is sketch-like and the idea always seems to outweigh the accurate definition of the shapes. But, it is Colescott's portrayal of both women and African-Americans which seems to raise the ire of the public and even the NAACP has protested his work. I ask my students: Is his art effective in getting across his message? Is

his art interesting or beautiful? If he were sitting here in this room today what questions would you ask him?

My student surveys showed that ninety percent of them felt that his work was effective in his message which to most was "Showing how racism exists, by showing how strange it is to see an African-American in a white person's spot in a painting." However, most of my students felt that his paintings were ugly, even if as some of them added, "They were funny or had funny titles." The question a student asked of him which I found to be the most thoughtful was, "Do you like women?"

Certainly, his depiction of women has raised eyebrows among many people. In fact, Leslie Lowry Sims, curator of the African-American museum in Washington, D.C. states that although she still finds his depiction of women questionable, she understands his satirical strategy. She says, "At first I thought, I was being trangressive in my appreciation of his work and I can see how people who go for the gut reaction too quickly could find it offensive." (Colescott: 1998) But the longer look often proves more substantial. Colescott adds, "I believe that a lot of serious things are said through jest"

Hearing Colescott directly from his biographical video proved most educational for my students. After a preliminary survey in which most students reacted to his work nebulously, sixty percent later claimed to like it and find it visually pleasing. Regarding content one student said, "I agree with that curator (Leslie Lowry Sims) " I don't like the way he shows women either but probably since he got anger out of me he's an effective artist." Another student wrote: "I also think when he puts black and whites together in a painting you feel like you want to know what's going on, because it feels strange, which is the same reaction I have sometimes when I see a mixed couple at the mall or something. I know it's not right to think that or stare but that's just my reality, I'm curious about how that works."

Jean Michel-Basquiat

Whereas Robert Colescott is visibly older and articulate about his work's intent, Jean Michel Basquiat died very young and his artistic life remains largely speculative. Nonetheless, in his one recorded interview, he did describe himself as a "Creole"; the logical result of his Jamaican mother and Haitian father, both emigrants to the United States. Basquiat also had a bohemian artistic life. He was terribly addicted to drugs and although his

father was an accountant and his mother was confined to a mental institution, Jean Michel (until he was discovered) lived all over the place and sometimes on the streets. He would make art and poetry somewhat spontaneously, with found art materials and on rustic surfaces. Some critics such as Robert Hughes felt Basquiat was displaying such coarseness and using victim credentials to gain notoriety, but others touted his importance as the cerebral voice of the ghetto and his paintings and drawings quickly began to sell for up to thousands of dollars.

Basquiat's sudden escalation to fame is believed to have caused his demise and although financial security allowed him to be very productive and produce the large paintings/drawings for which we now know him, he died of a heroine overdose in 1989.

One of the teaching tools, which most helps with explaining the life of Basquiat is a commercially available film *Basquiat* directed by painter Julian Schnabel, who had mild contact with the artist and supposedly wanted to sympathetically portray the real person. I rarely show the whole two hour movie to my class, but some portions are effectively describe Basquiat's situation.

The clip which has generated the most discussion is a late interview with Basquiat. He is clever in turning the questions around and getting the point of the patronizing interviewer back to art and the harsh realities of life which he, like no one, can really explain. I will often ask students about this scene because I feel it directly portrays the white art establishment's encounter with an African-American, who is so wantonly categorized as "primal and exotic," But Basquiat is erudite, witty and pompous.

The question I asked of my students for Basquiat went beyond aesthetics. Most students were not shy in stating that his work was blatant ugly, his drawing style immature and his added words completely non-sense to them. So, I asked questions less directly. "Do you think his true identity made his work stronger or weaker?" Sixty percent claimed they thought it did.

One student wrote as part of a longer, optional response that, "Although Basquiat's identity was distinct, it was not totally the result of race." I brought this up later after collecting their surveys. Some students agreed that poverty and addiction were greater factors in determining his lifestyle and attitudes, but others said that these were normal circumstances of upbringing and if he were white, he would have not felt so nervous or angry. A

tangential discussion ensued about how many whites or Anglo-Americans don't feel like they have a non-American identity or their simply as one student put it they're "mutts": and pretty detached from Europe. "Nowadays that's pretty boring," said one student. I asked him to elaborate. He said "you get more attention, more scholarships and fame and stuff if you're non-white in our country today and this is because society recognized that they had to make up for all the bad that they've done in the past."

This discussion was really one of the better ones in class, because students were perhaps describing another angle of what estranged them from the radical minority artists. There was little feeling of being able to put themselves in their shoes or even aspiring to their type of fame and fortune because they viewed themselves as long-time, tradition-less Americans.

Guillermo Gomez-Pena

As Jean Michel's parents were willing and recent immigrants to the United states and Colescott's heritage dates back to slavery, the phenomena of Mexican and Mexican-American artists is unique because the border which separates Mexico and America is both literal, psychological and did not exist two hundred years ago. The most unusual and zany voice for this situation is Mexican-born

Guillermo Gomez-Pena. Many of my students think he would be better studied as an actor but in fact he is represented in major modern art history texts as a performance artist. The difference is formally defined: Performance art is ritualistically oriented and involves people in the act of acting, it also "enables the artist to offer their work at any time, for any duration, at any kind of site and in direct contact with their (often unsuspecting) audiences" (Arnason 1997:631). Theatre events are typically more structured.

Gomez-Pena gained public attention in the late seventies and early eighties by focusing on his passion: border issues. His most interactive works are best seen in the video "Guillermo Gomez-Pena" which I usually show my students in its entirety. This video highlights his performance pieces of "Couple in a Cage" and "Temple of Confessions". It also discusses the web site Gomez-Pena has created which students and I visited. The site is a ten question survey that proposes multiple choice answer-solutions for hypothetical and sometimes inane polyracial interaction. The survey-taker is asked to identify their own race and age and allegedly Gomez-Pena extracts his catalysts for his work through these responses. There is also room to dispel encounters with other races in the form of a "confession". For example, some of Gomez-

Pena's survey questions read: "Are you currently experiencing compassion fatigue? Has political correctness gone too far?" I don't know how my students responded to any of the website's questions, but to my surprise most did type in an experience or confession. I did ask them what taking the survey was like. Most students responded that it was interesting or kind of fun; others said that the way the questions were worded they felt coaxed into saying "yes" and that made them angrier later when the questions seemed to get bolder. A few students said they liked feeling like they were able to talk to a famous artist and perhaps influences a later art performance. When asked if the web site was performance art or art in general, most students said that "the design of the web page was cool, but the artist probably didn't create it himself and their interaction with it wasn't performance art because the artist was not live."

Back in the classroom, all of my students concurred that watching Gomez-Pena's performance pieces on video made him more of an artist in their eyes, than had the web page. The Gomez-Pena biographical video also shows behind-the-scenes work and rehearsals of his co-performers. Many of my students were stupefied that he rehearsed and then spent eight hours in a

museum, in a glass box doing repetitive acts and trying to interact with passersby. My students also did not always grasp his references to Pre-Columbian Aztec rituals such as when he pumps up his arm for a hypothetical sacrifice, and some interpreted this as a preliminary activity for "shooting-up". They also honed in on his audiences reactions almost more than his performance.

In the video "Couple in a Cage" Gomez-Pena and partner dress up to play the part of discovered natives of an unexplored island, brought for display to various natural history museums around the world as living specimens of undiscovered beings. The point of this piece was to illuminate how various institutions have historically dehumanized people by exclaiming their cultural practices as primitive or exotic. Nonetheless, the video primarily shows a variety of viewer reactions, some of which are unbelievably naïve and my students chuckled aloud. When asked however how if they would interact with such a display, most were confident they would not. When asked if they found the "leashed and caged" aspect of the performance offensive, students were divided in their responses. Some wrote that "made sense in a museum setting" whereas others wrote that "it was creepy because that kind of captivity is like prison" and "no one should be caged

or tied up even if they want to be." Finally, the work of Gomez-Pena also appears in book form and he created a pamphlet for the quincentennial celebration of Columbus' "discovery" of America, taken from a Native American point of view. The most appreciated portion of this fold-out to my students is Columbus' illegal alien card. Two students mentioned that they thought this was clever. One student questioned it as fine art.

Kara Walker's Subversive Pretties:

"Women, too can raise eyebrows," I announced as we began to look at the work of Kara Walker, whose work I was recently encountered in Los Angeles. Walker is very young and new to the art scene, but nonetheless has caused such controversy that that African-American artist Bettye Saar wrote an inflammatory letter against her receiving of a three hundred thousand dollar MacCarthur Grant.

"Walker's best-known projects consist of large-scale black paper cut-outs which form tableaux of fictionalized scenes inspired by the antebellum south. These works are full of exaggerated racial attributes, perverse eroticism and frank scatology resembling the phantasmatic transmogrifications of history which occur in

romance novels." (Saltz 1996:83) Walker has defended her work as a response to feeling victimized by stereotypical attitudes:

"I decided to offer up my side-long glance: to be a slave just a little bit...So I used this mythic, fictional kind of slave charade to justify myself to reinvent myself in some other situation. (Salktz 1998:86).

From a distance Walker's work is simple and beautiful. It looks like large Victorian paper cut-outs, which was a craft form practiced as a past-time by Southern slave-owning women among others. Up close, the work reveals its unsettling context of miscegenation, sexual violence and a portray of hyper sexuality in Africans/African-Americans.

The only book in print at this time on Walker is a diary-like book which she wrote while in graduate school. The book details the channeling of her art student energy and anger into the idea for which she is now most known. Walker holds nothing back in her poetry or photographs. The paper cut-outs in fact seem the almost refined culmination of her preceding work.

"It's also about 'sex sells'" chimed in one student and I attempted to broach the sexual essence of Walker's work. Seeing the sexuality of the cut-out figures is not difficult, but speculating

on their exact meaning is. Through exaggeration of physiology and surrounding jungle flora, the figures are supposed to be of African descent. The activities they're shown doing are both banal and lascivious. This proved puzzling for my students. Even after recently viewing the controversial work of photographers, Andre Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe, an unseen student "tsk tsked" the images, muttering "this is totally disgusting." Sensing their displeasure or uneasiness, I advanced to the anonymous written questions: "Are the issues Walker deals with valid? Is Walker's work sophisticated?

Most students understood from my discussion, what the issues were, but I don't think they had ever heard of these in historical accounts or contemporary contexts. Thus, most did not find them valid. As far as her work being sophisticated I postulate that many students find this word synonymous with "daring." Eighty percent of responders found her work sophisticated. Only ten percent of the class construed her work as humorous.

Masami Teraoka

We moved on to another artist who dealt with gestures of sexuality in contemporary Asian and America. Masami Teraoka, may be said to defy conventions. Teraoka emigrated to the United States in

the seventies in search of an artistic freedom which he could not find in his native home of Japan. But what he did retain from Japan was the look of a printed image called *ukiyo-e*, which was made popular in 17th Century as it mocked the unreal world of the daft and eccentric elite. Masami used this look but depicts modern dilemmas of consumerism and hyper-sexuality. Japanese and American or east and west relationships seem to comprise the focus of his work. While America is often embodied by seductive blond temptresses and McDonalds, he shows Japan as mindlessly consuming such ideals.

Teraoka also stamps his representation of sexual compulsion through Japanese inscriptions which are written as classical calligraphy, but translate as descriptors in a smutty novel. Although crudity is ensconced in the soft beauty of this art form, Teraoka's aim is to call attention to a narcissistic, hedonistic world. Whether his mermaid-like figures don condoms for their soon-to-be lovers or exude pustules from explosive STDs all images appear sad, beautiful and horrifying.

Some focal female students voiced opposition to his employment of the promiscuous, blond American as a Satan-like creature, but another woman noted that using this stereotype was

Teraoka's prerogative. Written responses revealed that all students found his work interesting and one student anonymously noted that many Asian women have infected GI's during overseas service. Although I first thought this was a pithy grudge comment, I did bring it up at the next class, sandwiching it between other more innocuous comments from the previous day. After a moment, a female student responded that "that could be true but prostitutes or women war victims are pretty financially helpless, but no guy is forced to go to one. No more comments followed.

Conceptual Art of Adrian Piper:

Adrian Piper is the only artist I've researched and presented who was trained as a philosopher and received a doctoral degree in the field from Harvard University. One would expect a typical career after such a degree to be teaching or writing, but certainly not performance art. Nonetheless, Piper stands as an artist of both cerebral and zany presentation.

Her most famous and also accessible piece exists in actual and video form at The Museum for Contemporary Art in Chicago. Piper assumes the stance of a dead pan lawyer in a newscaster context. Frontally facing the audience form the TV screen set on a table in the corner, she simply delivers messages about how you

(any viewer) contain African blood in your body, but is still inevitably racist and so forth.

It is interesting to watch people in the museum interact with this piece. The chairs are a welcome refuge from museum back, but once hooked into the dialogue, many viewers shift around and seem to wonder when walking away wouldn't be conspicuous. Piper's gift seems an ability to capture an audience and have us confront her convictions. She also handed out business size cards once which states in part: Dear Friend, I am black. I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark." And then the card continues to say that she'll react not vocally or aggressively but by giving you the card as a reminder, she's assured that you'll regret the discomfort your racism is causing her.

In the seventies Piper also staged a mugging in which she dressed as a super hippy black male and assaulted a friend in the park to attract the attention of bystanders. She also initiated "funk lessons' to rectify what she felt was an aversion by the white community to this art form. Piper said " reluctance of some whites to partake in a black dance comes less from puritanism that from a sense of intrusion and impotence; to participate in black cultures is

to pretend to be what one is not: hipper and sexier than one feels." (Berger 199:45) In her staged performance of "funk lessons" ordinary volunteers (largely white) danced together to demystify the dance technique.

Color or perception of color is also an ongoing theme in Piper's work. As a light-skinned African-American woman, both black and white worlds have accused her of false identification. Behind the television screen in her piece cornered is one birth certificate identifying her as black, the other one claims she is white. Piper also did a series of crayon colorings over the black and white photographs of friends' faces. This very simple act is a good example of conceptual art because while the manufacturing act was simple and idea-based, its inclusion in the art world is complex and debated.

About half of my students found Piper's work thoughtful with only one questionable elaboration given that "if she has so many degrees, why doesn't she do something like be a lawyer or something and then she could really do justice." The other half of my students found her work interesting and funny, "the way it got people involved and that was clever."

Conclusions:

My students were awakened by exposure to "radical minority artists. " In response to the humor, style and sensational nature of their work, students were put in the position of trying to view life from a different point of view. As per "art" and the "art world" the featured "radical minority" artists may only have affirmed an often mentioned student question "Can art be about anything or made out of anything?"

However the greater meaning of the art of the selected minority artists was one of creative play with stereotypes. But this play is dangerous with the subject that is usually anything but funny or admissible. Herein, commentator David Joselit asks a pertinent question: "Is reiterating a stereotype a subversive act or does it merely extend the violence of a crude slur?" (Joselit 2000:30)

This is the final question I reworked and asked my students aloud: "Does the artists use of stereotypes make you think that their really false or do you think because they use the stereotypes, it reinforces them in your mind as true? Responses to this varied. One student stated that "the stereotypes were both funny and serious, but the serious ones (such as the method that Adrian Piper

used) had more impact on him in terms of making him think about it must be to view the society as minority person. One student recalled Kara Walker's work and said that she failed to see how that made people (black or white) feel anything but confusion or anger. " I just thought it was weird" she said, "maybe people during the slave time felt that African-Americans were like that, but I personally never thought that. I was brought up to feel that slavery was a terrible institution and I think she made it look like a big party of something. But it may be because I don't know much, it's not like we have a lot of African-American families around here." And the last student response followed: " I don't think these artists are really any different from other modern artist that gets audience attention by shocking them. The only difference is that they're using the subject of race, which of course is controversial everywhere, not just in art. I think their work is pretty cool actually even if it's not always nice to look, but neither has been a lot of the other art we've looked at this semester so far."

Works Used:

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Videos

Annenberg Collection. (1997). Guillermo Gomez-Pena. Vermont: Burlington.

Robert Colescott. (1993) The One-Two Punch.

Schnabel, Julian, director. (1997) *Basquiat* Miramax Films.

Fusco, Coco.

Heredia, Paula. *Couple in a Cage: A Guatinauan Odyssey*. Chicago: Video Data Bank.

Student Reactions:
Population Modern Art History Classes-65 person total (2 sections)

Robert Colescott:

Recorded spoken responses: (initial gut reaction to the work)
"I don't know what he's doing but there's something funny about the way he's painting people all crammed together"
"I think his work is funny, I understood it immediately as a parody"
"It' kind of sloppy-at least the painting style"
"interesting but I don't know what's going on"

Post Explanation:

Work is nice	yes 20%	no: 80%
Work is interesting to look at	yes 90%	no: 10%
Work is effective in conveying message	yes 90%	no: 10%
Work represents the spirit of the times	yes 40%	no: 50%

Anonymous written surveys

Depiction of women	Poor 80%	OK 20%
Depiction of blacks	Poor 20%	OK 80%

Recorded/anonymous Written Response Surveys:
"I might be offended if I didn't know it was by a black person"
His depiction of women is offensive -he makes them look like sluts
He can get away with painting African-Americans like that because he's black.
I don't' think he's a great painter -his painting style is not clear, it's like he's more of a comic artist
I think he's right -because mixed couples have a hard time in America

Questions you would like to ask the artist:

1. how do you feel about white people?
2. Do you think there's been an improvement in the last few decades with race?
3. Does your family like your work?
4. How much per painting?
5. What was the Biennale like-how do international people see your work?
6. "I don't like the way he shows women (either) but probably since he got anger out of me he's an effective artist."
7. "I also think when he puts black and whites together in a painting you feel like you want to know what's going on, because it feels strange, which is the same reaction I have sometimes when I see a mixed couple at the mall or something. I know it's not right to think that or stare but that's just my reality, I'm curious about how that works."

Jean Michel Basquiat:

Recorded spoken responses: Initial gut reaction to the work
"looks really primitive"
"scary/psychotic"
"why did he paint on a fridgerator?"
" I like the colors overall, I'm not sure what the words mean because I can read them but they don't make sense."

Post explanation:

Work is nice to look at	yes 20%	no 80%
Work is interesting to look at	yes 30%	no 60%
Work is effective in conveying message	yes 10%	no 80
Work represents the spirit of the times	yes 85%	no 10%

Anonymous written surveys

Basquiat understood his identity	yes 50%	no 50
Basquiat used his identity in work	yes 0	no 100%
Basquiat's identity hindered his work	yes 60%	no 30%

Recorded/anonymous Written Response Surveys::
"one weird dude, he took advantage of the system"
" I think all artists are insane and he was too, but I don't see what's so great about his work"
"his rough childhood explains how he became so paranoid and painted like that"

Questions you would like to ask the artist:
1. did you mean to overdose?
2. Why were you so rude to your girlfriend?
3. What do your paintings mean?
4. Were you high when you painted the refrigerator
5. Do you think all white people are leeches
6. If you could live again, what would you do differently?

Guillermo Gomez-Pena

Recorded spoken responses: Initial gut reaction to the work

"what is this?"
"he's doing performance art, which means it's hard to tell what effect he's going for?
"he looks like a cross-dresser"
"the woman in the cage is totally awesome"
"I don't know what this is, but to me, it' not art"
"crazy!" "phat"
"it looks like some Mexican ritual"

Post Explanation

Work is nice to look at	yes 25%	no 75%
Work is interesting to look at	yes 80%	no 10%
Work is effective in conveying message	yes 30%	no 60
Work represents the spirit of the times	yes 25%	no 50%

Anonymous Response surveys:

Gomez-Pena's web site is interactive art	yes 10%	no: 90%
I would actively interact w/ Gomez-Pena's museum performance	yes: 20%	no: 75%
Gomez-Pena's practice of displaying himself is appropriate:	yes: 45%	no 55%

Recorded/anonymous Written Response Surveys:

"once it was explained I see how his mind works, neat."
NOT ART!'
"I would think he was a total freak if I was in the museum"
'I would not have the nerve to do what he does but it's interesting"
"My cousin is Mexican(American) and it's true that there's a lot of hidden prejudice out there'
'I didn't think he was effective, but his web site got me mad, so I guess he was"
"I felt like the survey forced you to answer in one way"
"The survey was obviously trying to get the answer he wanted"
"The Columbus ID card is more like a comic book or advertisement"
"The ID card was funny and entertaining, but I wouldn't expect it to go down in history because its totally mass-produced"
"The poster and the ID thing were humorous but not fine art"
"the design of the web page was cool but the artist probably didn't create it himself and our interaction with it wasn't performance art because the artist was not live"

Questions you would like to ask the artist:

1. can I be in your show?
2. how long does it take to learn your acts-do you memorize scripts
3. is their more bigotry on the border than in other parts of America
4. do you live in NYC because it's more glamorous than Mexico?
5. How much per performance?
6. What did you do with the McCarthur grant?
7. How did you get people to take you seriously?
8. How often do you check the web page. Do you ever respond back to people. If you use their comments, isn't that plagiarism?

Kara Walker

Recorded spoken responses: Initial gut reaction to the work

"weird I see people's outlines but they're doing strange things'
"Interesting-but once I noticed the distortions, I was like" what is that?"
'It's really just cut out black paper, how much does she get for that?

Post explanation:

Work is nice to look at	yes 70%	no 10%
Work is interesting to look at	yes 90%	no 05%
Work is effective in conveying message	yes 20%	no 70%
Work represents the spirit of the times	yes 10%	no 80%

Anonymous Response Surveys;

The issues that Walker deals with are valid?	yes 40%	no: 50%
Walker's work is sophisticated?	yes: 60%	no: 30%
Walker's work is amusing.	yes. 10%	no 85%

Recorded/anonymous Written Response Surveys:

"this is one sick person"
"I think she's doing it for money"
" I think blacks who exploit blacks are as bad as whites who exploit them"
" I didn't even know what miscegenation was, but know I do, I think an artist can do whatever they what and she's doing a good job with getting attention using simple materials"
"disgusting-I would be furious if I took my kids to the museum and they saw this"

Questions you would like to ask the artist:

1. what's up with you?
2. Did you have a bad childhood
3. Do you hate white people
4. Do you think that you deserved that money?
5. Would you consider using new materials in the future?
6. Does your work get more reaction from Black or white people?

Masami Teraoka:

Recorded spoken responses: Initial gut reaction to the work

"Asian look but sickly subjects"
"is that a woman or a man?"
"colors don't seem modern"
"is that Japanese writing?"

Post Explanation

Work is nice to look at	yes 90%	no 10%
Work is interesting to look at	yes 90%	no 10%
Work is effective in conveying message	yes 80%	no 10
Work represents the spirit of the times	yes 90%	no 0%

Anonymous Response Surveys:

Is Teraoka's work offensive?	Yes 60%	no 20%
Is Teraoka talented?	yes 90%	no 10%

Recorded/anonymous Written Response Surveys:

"Good ideas'
"Kind of depressing"
'It would be better as a billboard instead of in museums"
"It's doesn't seem usual to me that an Asian person would be so bold, every one that I've ever known has been shy"
"not all American blonds are Satan!"
"many Asian women also infected GI's with STD's during wars-it works both ways

Questions you would like to ask the artist:

1. Why the focus on sex?
2. Do you think that Americans are totally promiscuous?
3. Do you think you'll ever write your words in English?
4. Where do you sell your work? How much does it go for?

Adrian Piper:

Recorded spoken responses: Initial gut reaction to the work

"can't tell what it is, just a television and self-portrait exaggerating her negroid features"

" are her drawings what' s famous or what?"

"I bet she's a performance artist and that's just a sketch of her act"

Post Explanation

Work is nice to look at	yes 40%	no 50%
Work is interesting to look at	yes 70%	no 20%
Work is effective in conveying message	yes 60%	no 30%
Work represents the spirit of the times	yes 55%	no 35%

Anonymous Written Response Surveys:

Does Piper do conceptual art effectively	yes 90%	no 5%
Would you want to attend a lecture by Piper	yes 20 %	no 70%
Is Piper's work thoughtful:	yes 40%	no 50%

Recorded/anonymous Written Response Surveys:

"I think if somebody stages a mugging for fun it's dangerous"

"I like the way she got people involved , that was clever."

"if she has so man degrees, I think she should be a lawyer. She could get better justice that way"

"I like the way he

her work seemed to be more in her head than anyone elses

her work interupts people, but I don't think it changes them

Questions you would like to ask the artist:

1. where do you get your ideas?
2. Did people in college think you were a freak?
3. Do you keep track of people in the museum (in Chicago) looking at your work
4. Do you think it's harder for light-skinned black people than darker people?
5. What will you do next?

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Printed Name: Lemuel Berry, Jr.

Organization: NAAAS, NAHLS, NANAS, IAAS

Address: PO Box 325
Biddeford, ME 04004-0325

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